

Before You Wake

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Before You Wake

by [shutupanakin](#)

Summary

WASTING YOUR TIME SPOILERS. THIS IS A PREQUEL.

Wilbur approached the railing in two long steps, emptying his stomach into the dark water below.

Ugh, there went his lunch; and the *alcohol*. There went his *alcohol*, Wilbur was near tempted to jump in after it. To wash himself away with—

Oh.

Oh.

Wilbur leaned over the railing, just to get a better look at the water rushing by.

It wouldn't be quick, he thought, morbidly. Not unless he cracked his head open on the rocks. No, he'd have time to contemplate and regret before the water snuffed him out.

Wilbur was familiar with it, death. Not in the poetic, stereotypical old friend kind of way; more like an estranged family member that just kept *showing up*. More bitter than sweetness, more wishing that it would just *go away*.

...

or: Wilbur plans on dying. He intends on making everyone hate him before he does.

Notes

STOP!!

This is a PREQUEL to my fic "Wasting Your Time". A year late, but it's finally here!

I feel the need to add that WYT was written and plotted a year ago, and that the character of Technoblade was written to be deceased before the announcement. It was contemplated whether or not I would write him out of WYT and this series, but ultimately decided not too after talking about it with some other people.

However, please do not make comments relating to Technoblades death in real life. I know. You don't need to tell/or remind me. And if you think the character of Technoblade being deceased will upset or trigger you I encourage you to not read. Please be safe.

my [twitter](#)

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the [playlist](#) for this fic

On that note, the other warnings go as follows;

- suicide
- minor referenced self harm
- major character death
- drinking/alcoholism
- smoking

remember to be safe :)

as of 3/14/24, I will not be finishing this. I do not support Wilbur anymore, and while I believe in the separation of character and man it is too difficult for me to continue something as heavy as this. I'm sorry.

The lighter flicked on.

Orange eclipsed blue, and Wilbur let himself entertain the idea of wielding the power to set the skyline on fire. Erupting in oranges and reds and yellows, burning it to soot and ash until there was nothing left but a smoke-tainted picture.

The lighter flicked off.

The skyline was no longer so satisfying.

Without the orange contrast, it's hardly blue, Wilbur thinks. It's muted, ever *so* gray.

Wilbur hated it.

The grayness, the filter of misery. It's boring to look at. He's *bored*.

He flicked the lighter back on.

It'd felt so long since he last had a cigarette. It had been two months since Niki banned them inside the apartment— banned them from *him*, like he was a *child* she was trying to ground.

He would bring them home, and they would go missing and he would *yell* and she would yell back and yelling would turn into screaming and screaming would turn into one of them slamming doors so hard that they shake the apartment.

It was ugly. The yelling, and the screaming, and then the regretful apologies that would follow. It was a cycle; Wilbur would bring home cigarettes, Niki would hide them. Wilbur would yell, beg, search— one time he emptied their garbage bin until he found the pack that she had buried underneath all the trash.

He's squeezed this cycle so many times that she doesn't even hide them in the apartment anymore. She probably takes them and throws them away in some back alley dumpster owned by a shitty restaurant that Wilbur's never been to. Wilbur contemplated it; going to the disgusting three-star restaurants nearby and digging through their trash just to *see* if they had the freshly bought carton that Niki threw away.

Wilbur wished she would give up. For herself, and for *him*— because Wilbur is considering throwing himself off the fire escape at a chance to find the leftover buds that he *knew* were on the pavement below.

Wilbur stared at the pavement.

He could really, *truly* use a cigarette.

The lighter flicked off.

The sun was setting now, at least; so it had an *excuse* to not be the true blue that it *deserved* to be. If the sun was setting that meant it was almost four, and almost four meant it was almost

four-thirty and that Niki would be home soon.

Niki leaves their flat at *four-twenty-five am* every morning so she can walk the fifteen-minute trip to a rundown bakery. Niki got the job because she's *good*, Niki stays because she's *good*.

Wilbur would, of course, never call it rundown to her face. That was a *rude*, truthful thought that Wilbur kept to himself; thank you. Niki deserved better than his rude, truthful thoughts.

Niki deserved better regarding a lot of things— another, honest, *truthful* thought. Niki deserved better than a twelve-hour shift at a shitty bakery that has kept her at the same position for four years. Wilbur knows for a *fact* that she has been there longer than any of the other current employees and should be *running* the damned place. Niki deserved her own shop, in a nicer part of the city; Niki deserved *better*.

Niki deserved better than *him*, definitely; truthful, honest thought number three. Factual. Sincere. Candid. *All the synonyms in the fucking book* — it was just *true*.

Wilbur should go inside.

He didn't know if that could be considered another one of his truthful, honest, thoughts. He just *should*. It was *cold*, and now it was getting dark; and if Niki came home and he was still out here she would just somehow *know* that Wilbur had been out here for the better part of the day.

She wouldn't be *upset* with him, *necessarily*. Disappointed. Worried— which was infinitely *worse* than upset or disappointed. She had the right to be upset with him; disappointed, disgusted, *sick of*; Wilbur didn't deserve or need her *worry*.

With that thought Wilbur groaned, shaking the numbness from his leg. He had to properly duck to climb back into the window from the fire escape. It was four-oh-five, which meant he had a proper thirty minutes before Niki came home.

The flat was chilled— a consequence of sitting on the fire escape with the *window open*. That was a problem. A giveaway.

Wilbur shut the window, dragging himself across the flat to turn the heat up; only by a bit, *Wilbur* didn't pay the bills. Niki and her six-twelve-hour shifts did— the only thing he properly contributed was Phil's monthly guilt money.

Leave it to Wilbur Soot's father to wire seven hundred pounds a month but not bother to leave a *phone call* every once in a while.

Wilbur wasn't being completely fair to Phil; not really. Grief was such an ugly, messy thing. People going through different stages at different times and all that *bullshit*; that's what his therapist had said— without the *bullshit*— part. His therapist had said that they should give each other *time*, and that's what Wilbur was doing, really!

He just— never got past the *giving each-other* time stage; he stopped seeing his therapist two

and a half months ago. He had canceled an appointment the morning of a really bad hangover, which broke the little routine that he really had *left*.

Wilbur wondered if Phil was seeing a therapist; he probably was, *god*, he probably needed one just a bit *more*. Losing a son, the other one mutually *ghosting* you; that was some awfully tough luck.

Wilbur just couldn't do it, though. He hated the way people— bandmates, old coworkers, acquaintances, *friends*— had looked at him for the last seven months. *I'm sorry for your loss*, they would say and they hadn't even *known* Techno— or— or they would ask *how are you doing?* Or *I understand, I recently lost*— and start talking about *themselves*.

Somehow, it's more infuriating when someone comes up to talk to him and they just *talk*, and he knows they know his brother is *dead* and they talk and talk and act like everything is *fine*

Are you still with your band? How's your dad? Are you working again yet? Do you need anything? Questions, questions, questions that made Wilbur want to drink himself into a fucking *hole*.

He could really, honestly, *earnestly* use a cigarette.

The heat was turned on, the window was closed, the dishes had been done; Niki had texted him on her break, asking him. It was the thing to make him get out of bed today, and how *pathetic* was that; that Niki was well into her shift, on her break, and Wilbur was still in his *bed*.

Niki used to drag him out, get him up with her; during the time when Wilbur was *sure* he was getting better; when *everyone* was sure Wilbur Soot was returning to being *Wilbur Soot*. She'd make Wilbur get up and walk with her to work; where he would sit in the lobby for an hour or two past opening hour.

Wilbur glanced at the digital clock that sat on the kitchen counter; twenty minutes until Niki was home.

Wilbur could leave now, let Niki come home to a peacefully empty flat. Wilbur could disappear now, and have to worry about the flurry of worried questions later.

The *worry*, ugh, another thing he had learned to hate in the past eight months; the constant *worrying*. Wilbur couldn't leave his fucking bedroom without a *where are you going? Do you want me to come with?*

Wilbur wasn't a fucking child; he was a grown, *twenty-four-year-old* man with thinning hair and wrist pains. He didn't need a babysitter to look over his shoulder because he was *sad*.

Wilbur had his coat on and was out the door in seconds; going swift and fast before he could change his mind and give into the temptation to just climb into his bed and stay there for the next fourteen hours.

It was chilly, and overall misty out. London was horrible this time of year— *England*, in general. Not even the rocky beaches of Brighton were a pleasurable place to be.

The first time he had asked Schlatt why he had moved from the US his answer was the healthcare. The *second* time Wilbur had asked— after listening to the man bitch about the *weather* for thirty-six minutes straight— was business taxes.

Wilbur never really understood; he'd deal with the shit health insurance and American Taxes if it meant he would wake up and be able to see the sun every day.

He had spent three months of the summer there with his dad and Techno; a business inquiry for Phil and a vacation for two seventeen-year-olds.

Wilbur had fallen *hard* for one of the locals; an American girl with *deep*, deep red hair. Techno had insisted privately that her hair had to be dyed, and that there was just *no* logical way someone's hair was naturally that shade of red.

Wilbur had ignored him at the time, running off with the girl with the impossibly red hair and the older sister who for some reason had just *despised* him. A twenty-six-year-old woman with a vendetta against a seventeen-year-old British tourist; for those three months in the paradise he considered California he was living in his very own dramatization of *Romeo and Juliet*.

It ended right then and there when Wilbur landed back in England and took his phone off of airplane mode and discovered that he had been *blocked* from her phone number. It had caused a mental breakdown that lasted for two weeks.

Techno had teased him for it when they got older, right up until—

...Wilbur recently wished that he hadn't met Sally, during that vacation. That he had spent more time with Techno, with Phil even. Just with his *family*. He wished so desperately that he could go and yell at his teenage self to stop running off with a girl that he would never see again.

Wilbur wished it, truly; just so he could have more photos than the few they took at the beach where his face looked funny because he had gotten sand in his eye. More pictures of his family *mostly* whole.

Wilbur wondered what Sally was up to now; if she ever thought about him the same way he thought about her. If she had gone to uni— if she was *married* if she had a stable career. If she was *stable*.

She probably was if she *wasn't* thinking about him. Wilbur did not really consider stable being pondering over a short relationship she had with some melodramatic Brit when she was a teenager.

Wilbur doubted it, Sally lived so much in the moment, and for a time *he* was her moment. She moved fast and looked forward while Wilbur dragged his feet trying to keep up— something about *Americans* and their swift ability to knock you off your feet.

It was getting darker, now. Niki would be home. Wilbur hadn't checked to see whether or not she had called him, his phone completely shut off. He didn't particularly trust himself to go to Schlatt's with his phone accessible after seeing the series of drunken texts that he had sent to *Phil*.

Schlatt's pub sat at the corner, on the end of a business-filled street. It was accompanied by other bars and stores and tiny little shops all on their last leg.

Schlatt didn't like to acknowledge that part, though; he was far more determined than the other locally owned business owners with graying hairs and tired eyes.

The rock and roll music that Schlatt blasted inside and *outside* his could be heard all the way down the block; making Wilbur cringe slightly as he approached. Schlatt insisted it was attention-grabbing, Wilbur just thought of it as obnoxiously overstimulating.

Everything about it was just a little too much; from the blasting rock and roll music to the New York-themed interior. It was a war crime to the senses; but Schlatt was his friend and gave him discounted bottomless drinks so Wilbur dealt with it, respectfully.

The bottomless drinks *used* to be free; a courtesy to a grieving friend. Wilbur had lost that privilege three months ago after Niki had called to yell at Schlatt after she spent four hours looking for Wilbur after he had left the pub pissed drunk.

Now he got a sixty-five percent discount and occasionally a ride home from Schlatt if Wilbur stayed till closing.

There were a few loners, a small group Wilbur was convinced was heckling a waitress; it was uncrowded, the Tuesday night dinner rush hadn't come in yet— something that Wilbur, personally, greatly appreciated.

Schlatt, on the other hand, did *not* ; if the sour look on told him anything as Wilbur approached the bar.

"Soot," Schlatt said, his voice gruff and tired. He didn't need to pretend with Wilbur. Gone was the confident New Yorker businessman persona; now it was just Schlatt, Wilbur's friend and favorite alcohol distributor.

Wilbur greeted him with a groan, resting his elbows on the counter of the bar to support his head. "You got a cigarette?"

Schlatt looked up from the glass he was wiping, setting down the questionable-looking rag. "Not any for you."

"Come *on* ," Wilbur groaned again, louder this time. "Will you not entertain a desperate man?"

Schlatt shook his head. "Niki will have my head *and* my ass— fuck up your lungs on your own time."

“You are such a hypocrite,” Wilbur grumbled, rubbing circles into his forehead. “Help me ruin my liver at least?”

Schlatt set down the glass he had just been cleaning, pushing it towards Wilbur. “Now *that*, I can do. Vodka?” Schlatt knew him well.

Wilbur nodded, and Schlatt filled the glass nearly to the brim with vodka. Wilbur downed half of it, before the burn finally got to him.

Schlatt grimaced, making a disgusted noise. “I don’t know how you do that, man.”

“Lack of taste buds helps,” Wilbur said, swirling the glass around. “Are you going to drink with me?” Schlatt shook his head, and Wilbur groaned.

“I can’t do it on the job!”

“You are your own boss!”

“I have to set an *example*.”

“You are a *shitty* example,” Wilbur grumbled into his glass. “I think I saw one of your waiters taking a shot with a customer when I walked in.”

Schlatt was one of the very few people that Wilbur could still talk to without having to worry about pretending to be happy.

“Do ya’ want anything to eat?”

Wilbur lifted his head only to shake it. “You will give me food poisoning.”

Wilbur had only ever had a single sandwich from the back of *Schlatt and Co’s* kitchen; which ended in three days of food poisoning that Schlatt to this day claimed was a nasty hangover.

Wilbur thinks that’s *bullshit*, Schlatt was probably sliding money off to whatever health inspector came by so he could keep his kitchen open.

Wilbur lifted his glass again, taking a much smaller sip this time. “What is the plan for tonight?”

Schlatt shrugged, still wiping down glasses. “I’m closing early tonight, no dinner rush and no one’s been coming in.”

Wilbur hummed, taking another sip of his vodka. “What time?”

“Eleven.”

Wilbur nodded again, finishing off the rest of his drink. “I will hang around then.”

Schlatt paused, looking up from the glass he was holding. “You sure? You don’t think Niki will be looking for you?”

Wilbur shrugged. “She’s used to it.”

Schlatt sighed, shaking his head. “You need to quit this shit, Soot.”

I know. “She does not even like you that much, you know,” Wilbur groaned out.

“Alotta people don’t like me that much,” Schlatt scoffed.

“I’m just trying to make sure you don’t end up in a ditch somewhere.”

Wilbur rolled his eyes, resting his head on the counter. “I do not think a ditch is the worst place I could end up.”

He came here to get drunk, *away* from Niki— he didn’t come here to *talk* about Niki.

But Wilbur couldn’t help but switch his phone on and check his phone anyway; a single text message to *be safe*. That was it, no paragraphs or missed phone calls and voice-mails. Just two words.

Wilbur thought he could live a hundred lifetimes and never deserve Niki.

Wilbur ordered another drink.

Wilbur was through his third drink when the heckling group left and Schlatt sent the waitress home; his prediction about it being a slow night ended up being correct.

He was halfway through his fifth when his head started to pound— which *sucked*. He was *not* a light-weight, his head didn’t start to pound until *after* his sixth.

“I need to get out of here,” Wilbur muttered, massaging his forehead. This pub. This city. This *country*. “I gotta get out of here.”

“Mmm-hm,” His friend hummed. “It’s *not* like you have anywhere to be in the mornin’,” Schlatt grumbled, poking the bear with one hand and stirring the pot with the other. “You find a job yet?”

“Are—” Wilbur let a raucous-sounding laugh. “Are you parentin’ me? What— what is with everyone trying to *parent* me these days?”

“I’m not parenting *anyone*,” Schlatt pointed. “You’re just drunk.” Wilbur couldn’t tell if he was joking but he kind of wanted to punch him anyway.

“Where—” Wilbur leaned on his elbow, pointing at Schlatt. *Where the fuck did he get off?* “*You*. Maybe I’d— I would be on better legs if you weren’t so keen on lettin’ me destroy myself.”

There was silence, and then the nasty look Schlatt gets when he’s pissed off grew on his face and Wilbur *grinned*.

Wilbur’s grin dropped, and regret leaked through the drunken haze he had found himself in.

“Schlatt—”

“Out. I’m cuttin’ you off. You’re not gonna blame me for *your* shit.”

Wilbur straightened, pulling his hands off the counter. He couldn’t be *serious*. “Come on man —”

“*No*,” Schlatt snapped. “Get the fuck out of here Soot.”

Oh, Wilbur thought. This wasn’t the playful, ungentle anger that made up Schlatt’s personality and took up most of their interactions. This was unmasked, Wilbur realized, even through the unsteady drunken haze he had fallen into— this was *pissed off*.

“Schlatt.” He tried, one last time. One last plead to let him put out the fire.

Schlatt doesn’t give him the chance.

“*Out.*”

Wilbur stumbled out of the bar, abandoning any grace and dignity he had when he entered it. His sharpness was washed away *many* drinks ago, leaving him a pathetic husk wallowing in his own self-pity.

It was a bad idea, pissing off Schlatt. Schlatt would have usually let him stay until last call, and then until close; because Schlatt was his ride when Wilbur would be to out of it to find his own way home.

Now Wilbur had to *walk*, stumble— try not to fall on his fucking face. At least not until he got home, so he could fall on his face in the comfort of his bed or couch. Falling on his face in the concrete would be bad, *realllyyyy* bad, he could break his *nose*.

Pissing off Schlatt was a really, *really*, horrible idea; and coming to this realization for the second time made Wilbur groan outloud. He would most definitely tattle— *like a toddler*— to Niki, or worse, *Phil*; and that was a phone call that Wilbur would be avoiding. He’d throw his phone into the river and skip town before taking that phone call.

River. River—

Wilbur was on a bridge.

When did he get—?

Wilbur blinked, rubbing his eyes. *Whoo*, he was drunk— he was drunk and on a bridge that he didn’t remember getting on.

That was *inconvenient*. This was not part of his normal path *to* or *from* Schlatt’s. Not only was he hammered and *abandoned*, *but he was also* lost. He was lost!

He was *lost*. Bile and regret climbed up his throat at once.

Wilbur approached the railing in two long steps, emptying his stomach into the dark water below.

Ugh, there went his lunch; and the *alcohol*. There went his *alcohol*, Wilbur was near tempted to jump in after it. To wash himself away with—

Oh.

Oh.

Wilbur leaned over the railing, just to get a better look at the water rushing by.

It wouldn't be quick, he thought, morbidly. Not unless he cracked his head open on the rocks. No, he'd have time to contemplate and regret before the water snuffed him out.

Wilbur was familiar with it, death. Not in the poetic, stereotypical old friend kind of way; more like an estranged family member that just kept *showing up*. More bitter than sweetness, more wishing that it would just *go away*.

He and Techno grew up in hospitals, for the first seven years of their life. It was routine; to be in and out of the hospital to be with their mother. It was almost a fond memory, sitting by her bedside and her helping him with his maths homework while hooked up to an IV.

She died, when they were seven. A month from turning eight.

Cystic-fibrosis was treatable, not curable. Each treatment was a stretch of borrowed time; a concept that Wilbur just didn't *get* as a child, all that time in the hospital for *nothing*.

Wilbur was a sickly child.

Not in make-a-wish, constant surgery and a guaranteed death sentence before he was eighteen sort of way; but his immune system was *terrible*. Doctors— and *Phil*, god, *Phil* — was paranoid everytime he or Techno so much as *coughed*.

Which— was a lot, for Wilbur, as a child with asthma. That was a *bitch*. Wilbur wasn't particularly interested in playing sports, but he would have liked the *option*.

He was never diagnosed with it, anyway, test after test. Phil was less paranoid about Techno; who also never tested positive for it.

Asthma, a shit-immune system, a penchant for melodrama and a *medicine-cabinet* full of mental health issues; out of the two of them, Wilbur always *knew* he'd be the first to go. The doctors and their whispers expected it, Phil and his guilt expected it, maybe *Techno* expected it.

Techno had complained, and complained, and *complained* about the heatwave that had been sweeping through at the time. He complained, then joked, and then complained again. So Wilbur suggested an AC window unit; they grabbed an old, used one off of ebay. It took three people total to set it up; himself, Techno, and Schlatt.

All that time in hospitals growing up, all those doctors appointments— guitar practice while Techno was fencing, partying when Techno was studying; and he still went *first*.

It was supposed to be *him*, it was supposed to be Wilbur in the ground and Phil and Techno seeing each other grow old. It wasn't supposed to be *this*.

Wilbur gripped the railing until his palms were hurting and his knuckles were turning white. He could do it, jump and disappear beneath the murky surface.

Schlatt would call Niki, tomorrow. To tattle— *again*, like a toddler— and ask if he made it home alright. And Niki would realize he didn't come home; Wilbur liked to think she wouldn't be *to* worried at first, Wilbur had fender-benders where he didn't make it home to pass out until the afternoon.

But she would call around, anyway. Jack, Quackity— his dad, his step-mum. They'd all have the same response.

Niki would file a missing persons report, and then they'd pull his gross, bloated body out of the river two days later. Niki would be called, as his emergency contact; and then Phil as the next of kin.

Wilbur would disappear, with no note, no closure. He would die and they would had no idea if he had jumped or had fallen in a drunken haze.

And they would *grieve*. Oh, they'd grieve; and maybe that was an egotistical, self-absorbed thought, but he *knew*. He knew, in the same way they— *he* himself grieved for his brother.

The pain that followed grief was a venomous viper; something that sneaks up on you and tries to kill you slowly, a stubborn fight to stay alive.

Wilbur wasn't much of a fighter. So it makes the following thought easier to justify; Wilbur didn't want to die feeling loved.

Wilbur didn't want to *die* feeling *loved*. He wanted to disappear, to not leave a gaping hole in anyone's heart like Techno left in his, theirs.

Schlatt would be pissed at him, undeniably, for the next week, or so. Wilbur might have to set him off again, depending on how long this took him.

Wilbur pulled away from the railing, one last look at the water. One last chance to be selfish and end it *now*.

Wilbur shook his head. No, he could commit to this. *He was going to commit to this*, he swore— walking away from the bridge, and his last chance to die selfishly.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!